

Get to know your neighbors...

Ellen Kaiden, Watercolor Artist

As told to Steve Snapp

Ellen Kaiden is an award-winning, full-time watercolor artist with studios in Valencia Pointe and the Berkshires in Massachusetts. Ellen works in a style she calls “Idealized Realism,” and reviewers have written that she “is to watercolor what Dale Chihuly is to glass blowing.” She recently hosted a pop-up gallery event in her home to benefit The Pap Corps. She’s represented by the WIT Gallery in Lenox, Mass., and Gallery 14 in Vero Beach. To see her remarkable work, visit www.EllenKaiden.com.

When did you discover your affinity for watercolor?

I trained in all mediums of painting in college. After a long break, I signed up for a watercolor class and fell in love with it. Watercolor is, in many ways, uncontrollable, and so am I. It requires patience, which is not my strong suit. It has a mind of its own. I can start a painting and think it will go one way, but it says, “Oh, no! I am going to do this!”

You divide your life between the Berkshires and Florida. How do those different places influence you?

Both are incredible environments that offer a lot of “eye candy.” I swore I would never become a “Florida painter”—no palm trees or coconuts! I moved from Sarasota to Valencia Pointe a few years ago. At this point, I just paint what I want to paint. Sometimes, being a snowbird, it is quite hard to settle down and start a piece. Before I leave Florida, I start one so I have no excuses about working when I return. Sometimes, neighbors knock on my door and ask to see the work, thanks to word of mouth in VP.

Is that why you created a “pop-up gallery” here in Valencia Pointe?

Absolutely. In April, I worked with our local Pap Corps chapter to create a Sunday afternoon gallery event at home. That gave more neighbors a chance to see the work, and I pledged 25% of anything I made from sales to go to the Pap Corps for cancer research.

Your work is reminiscent of Georgia O’Keeffe. Is there a connection?

People have made that comparison often. I don’t try to emulate her work, but we have in common a love of watercolor and a fascination with the language of flowers. Flowers have always been perfect vehicles for telling my stories and sharing my feelings.



At a recent gallery show in St. Pete, Ellen exhibited 15 works, including these signature pieces from her “Secret Life of Sunflowers” series, which celebrates Ukraine

Do you have a favorite painting from the many you’ve done?

Yes. It’s a painting called *All About Eve*. At 40” by 50”, it’s an overscale mass of roses, anemones, and dahlias that celebrates the diversity of women. I especially love it because it pushed me to the edge of watercolor technique. One mistake and all would have been lost.

Are there next-generation painters in your family?

I hope so, with 12 grandchildren! I have an incredibly talented nine-year-old granddaughter named Rose. Her imagination, focus, and vision blow me away. Knowing there is another little artist on the way makes me very happy.